

we shouldn't be exporting oil when we are still importing it from dangerous places on the planet, and they keep all their tax breaks.

From my perspective, I look at the Republican mantra from 6 to 7 years ago. It was "Drill Here, Drill Now, Pay Less." They were saying: The more we drill here, the more energy independence we are going to have. They are replacing it this week with "drill here, export there, pay more" here at home. That is their new slogan. Everything they had said about why we should be drilling here is now made obsolete by their commitment to now ensure that oil gets exported. There are two prices: There is an OPEC price for global oil, and there is a Texas price for American oil. It is always cheaper here. They want to get it off into ships to get the OPEC price on the global market. I understand that.

What I don't understand is how we can leave behind—with tax breaks that are phasing out and the rumors that the wind tax break expires over the next 3 years—those new technologies that are branded "Made in America," such as these cell phone technologies, these smartphone technologies that have revolutionized countries and continents all across the planet.

I come to the floor to say I understand why Big Oil wants this. It is about as great a Christmas gift as any industry would ever have received.

In return, I hope before we adjourn that we can find a way of being more generous—much more generous—to those other companies, those other technologies that are the future. I hope the promises Republican Presidential candidates are making that they are going to come back and take the clean powerplant rules off the books—that they are protected because we have the tax breaks. It still signals to industries that they are our future and the past is just a memory, that there is a new 21st century vision that America is going to lead, that the promises President Obama made in Paris on behalf of the American people are, in fact, going to be met, and that our policies are going to reflect the words the President spoke.

I thank the Presiding Officer for this time.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, from voting to repeal ObamaCare to passing the first long-term Transportation bill in a decade and the first joint balanced budget in 14 years, Senate Republicans have worked hard this year to fulfill our promise to get Washington working again for American families.

While some of our efforts have been blocked by Senate Democrats or by the President, we have still managed to get a lot done. I am particularly proud of

some of the legislation we passed this year that will benefit South Dakota families and businesses as well as families and businesses across the country. One bill that I have been working on for a long time—a bill that will mean a lot to South Dakota's farmers and ranchers—is the legislation the House passed last week, the Surface Transportation Board reauthorization bill.

The Surface Transportation Board is responsible for helping to ensure the efficiency of our rail system by addressing problems and adjudicating disputes between railroads and shippers. Unfortunately, it has been clear for several years now that the Surface Transportation Board needs to work better. This became particularly apparent in 2013 and 2014 when a sharp increase in shipping demand and harsh winter weather conditions combined to create massive backlogs in the availability of railcars for grain shipping which, in turn, caused storage issues for farmers across the Midwest.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture found that the rail backlog lowered the price of corn, wheat, and soybeans in the upper Midwest. It forced shippers to pay record-high railroad-car premiums—in the neighborhood of 28 percent to 150 percent above the previous average levels—for roughly 65 consecutive weeks.

The Surface Transportation Board legislation that Congress sent to the President last week will help prevent another situation such as this in the future. The bill, which I spearheaded, makes a number of significant reforms to the Board. For starters, it establishes the number of Board members and establishes a more collaborative process that will allow members to work together to identify and solve problems as they emerge. The bill also provides the Board with the investigative authority to address rail service issues even if an official complaint has not been made. This will allow and encourage the Board to be more proactive when it comes to addressing problems in our Nation's rail system.

The bill also increases transparency by requiring the Surface Transportation Board to establish a data base of complaints and to provide quarterly reports with key information to facilitate the effective monitoring of service issues. Finally, the bill improves the current process for resolving disputes between railroads and shippers.

Right now, disputes can take multiple years and literally millions of dollars to resolve, putting a tremendous burden on shippers and on railroads as well. The legislation we developed improves this process by setting timelines for rate reviews, expanding voluntary arbitrary procedures, and requiring the Surface Transportation Board to study alternative rate review methodologies to streamline and to expedite cases. It requires the Surface Transportation Board to maintain at least one simplified, expedited rate review methodology. These changes will

increase efficiency throughout the rate review process.

South Dakota farmers and ranchers depend on our Nation's railroads to bring their goods to market. They also depend on our Nation's highways. This year I was proud to work with my colleagues in the Senate on the first long-term Transportation bill in a decade.

Over the past several years, Congress made a habit of passing numerous short-term funding extensions for Federal transportation programs. Over the past several years of short-term extensions, the latest, I think, was No. 38. That was an incredibly inefficient way to manage our Nation's infrastructure needs, and it wasted an incredible amount of money. It also put a lot of transportation jobs in jeopardy.

When Congress fails to make clear how transportation funding will be allocated, States and local governments are left without the certainty they need to authorize projects or to make long-term plans for addressing various transportation infrastructure needs. That means essential projects, construction projects, get deferred. Necessary repairs may not get made, and the jobs that depend on these projects and repairs are put at risk.

The Transportation bill we passed this month changes all that. It reauthorizes transportation programs for the long term, and it provides 5 years of guaranteed funding. It means States and local governments will have the certainty they need to invest in big transportation projects and the jobs that they create. That, in turn, means a stronger economy and a more reliable, safer, and effective transportation system.

As chairman of the commerce committee, I spend a lot of time working with committee members on both sides of the aisle to develop the Transportation bill's safety provisions. Our portion of the bill includes a host of important safety improvements, including enhancements to the notification process to ensure that consumers are informed of auto-related recalls, and also important reforms at the government agency responsible for overseeing safety in our Nation's cars and trucks.

Another important success for South Dakota this year was the final approval of the expansion of the Powder River Training Complex—the military training airspace over South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming. The expanded airspace approved by the Air Force and the Federal Aviation Administration will allow our air men and women to carry out critical training in conditions that more closely resemble combat missions. After working with the Air Force on this project for nearly 9 years, I was proud to see this expansion finally completed and even more delighted to see the first large-force training exercise take place at the expanded Powder River Training Complex just this month. Forty-one aircraft took part in the exercise, including the B-1 bombers from Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota.

The expanded training complex will save Ellsworth \$23 million per year in training costs by reducing the need for the B-1 bombers to commute to other places, such as Nevada and Utah, for training.

Supporting our men and women in uniform—like our airmen at Ellsworth—is one of the most important jobs we have as Members of Congress.

This year I am proud to report that the Senate passed a national defense authorization bill that incorporates a number of critical reforms that will expand the resources available to our servicemembers and strengthen our national security. The National Defense Authorization Act for 2016 tackles waste and inefficiency at the Department of Defense and focuses funding on our warfighters rather than on the Pentagon bureaucracy.

The bill also overhauls our military retirement system. Before this bill, the system limited retirement benefits to servicemembers who had served for 20 years or more, which means huge numbers of military personnel, including many veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, retired after years of service without having accrued any retirement benefits. The National Defense Authorization Act replaces this system with a new retirement system that will ensure that the majority of our Nation's servicemembers receive retirement benefits for their years of service to our country even if they have not reached the 20-year mark.

The bills I have discussed today are just a few of the accomplishments of the Republican-led Senate. Over the course of this year, we have passed a number of significant pieces of legislation that will benefit Americans for years to come.

We have worked hard to help our Nation's veterans by expanding access to mental health resources, reducing wait times for medical care, and increasing the number of providers who can serve veterans. We voted to repeal ObamaCare and start the process of moving toward the real health care reform Americans are looking for: an affordable, accountable, patient-focused system that puts individuals in control of their health care decisions. We passed legislation to contain the out-of-control bureaucracy at the EPA and legislation to begin the process of safeguarding Medicare and Social Security by putting them on a more sustainable financial footing going forward. We passed cyber security legislation to protect Americans' privacy and a major education reform bill that puts States, parents, teachers, and local school boards—not Washington bureaucrats—in charge of our children's education.

While we may have accomplished a lot this year, we know there is still a lot more that needs to be done. Americans are still suffering in the Obama economy, and our Nation continues to face terrorist threats at home and abroad.

Whether it is enacting pro-economic growth policies at home or ensuring that our military has the resources it needs to protect us from threats abroad, Republicans will redouble our efforts to make sure Washington is meeting the needs of American families and addressing the American people's priorities. We plan to spend the second year of the 114th Congress next year the way we have spent the first: fighting to make our economy stronger, our government more efficient and more accountable, and our Nation and our world safer and more secure.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, one of the brightest bright spots at the Paris climate talks last week was the robust corporate presence. Leading businesses and executives from around the world were there in Paris to voice their support for a strong international climate agreement. That brings me here today for the now 122nd time to say that it is time for America's leading corporations and their lobbyists to bring that same message here to Washington to help Congress wake up.

Let me use an example of two of the good guys. The two biggest drinks companies in America are Coca-Cola and PepsiCo. Coke and Pepsi both signed this public letter urging strong climate action in Paris:

Dear U.S. and global leaders:

Now is the time to meaningfully address the reality of climate change. We are asking you to embrace the opportunity presented to you in Paris. . . . We are ready to meet the climate challenges that face our businesses. Please join us in meeting the climate challenges that face the world.

And it is not just that public letter; Coca-Cola's Web site says it will reduce CO₂ emissions by 25 percent and that to do so, "Coca-Cola will work to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions across its value chain, making comprehensive carbon footprint reductions across its manufacturing processes, packaging formats, delivery fleet, refrigeration equipment and ingredient sourcing."

Coca-Cola also says: "We continue to partner with peer companies, bottling partners, NGOs, governments and others in addressing our greenhouse gas emissions and encouraging progress in response to climate change."

Pepsi's Web site heralds what it calls "its commitment to action on climate

change" and announces that it has signed both the Ceres BICEP Climate Declaration in the United States and the Prince of Wales's Corporate Leaders Group Trillion Tonne Communique in the UK. These commitments, they say, "are part of PepsiCo's overall strategy to address climate change by working across its business and with global leaders."

Here is Indra Nooyi, chairman and CEO of PepsiCo:

Combating climate change is absolutely critical to the future of our company, customers, consumers—and our world. I believe all of us need to take action now.

I have corresponded with these companies about climate change, and here is what they have said in their letters to me.

In March 2013, Coke said:

We recognize that climate change is a critical challenge facing our planet, with potential impacts on biodiversity, water resources, public health, and agriculture. Beyond the effects on the communities we serve, we view climate change as a potential business risk, understanding that it could likely have direct and indirect effects on our business.

As a responsible global company, with operations in more than 200 countries, we have a role to play in climate protection. . . .

Then in May 2014:

The Coca-Cola Company has strongly stated that climate change is happening and the implications of climate change for our planet are profound and wide-ranging. It is our belief that climate change may have long-term direct and indirect implications for our business and supply chain and we recognize that sustainability is core to our long-term value. . . . Climate protection is a key component of our business strategy.

In August of this year:

Coca-Cola joined twelve other corporations at the White House pledging our support for the American Business Act on Climate [Pledge]. Climate protection has been a key focus of Coca-Cola for decades.

In a letter of February 2013, Pepsi said:

PepsiCo applauds your efforts to address climate change by focusing Congressional attention on the issue. . . . At PepsiCo, we recognize the adverse impacts that greenhouse gas emissions have on global temperatures, weather patterns, and the frequency and severity of extreme weather and natural disasters. These impacts may have significant implications for our company. . . . Accordingly, responding to climate change is integrated into PepsiCo's business strategy.

In September of this year, Pepsi wrote:

We look forward to providing further support on the "Road to Paris"—demonstrating that actions by business in climate are not only good for the environment, but good for business.

That is all great stuff. Here is where it gets a little strange. Coke and Pepsi have a trade association, the American Beverage Association, that lobbies for the soft drink industry, and they also support the business lobbying group, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Indeed, the American Beverage Association sits on the board of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and contributes to it a lot of money.